



# Greater Boston PFLAG CONNECTIONS

Spring 2011

## Step UP! Pride and Passion 2011 Was A Tremendous Success, Thanks To You!

By Jennifer Swanson, Editor and Board Member

Greater Boston PFLAG's Step UP! Pride and Passion fundraiser held on April 27, 2011 was a huge success. The sold-out event hosted five hundred guests at One Marina Park Drive on Boston's waterfront.

Thanks to our generous supporters, we raised over \$300,000. Proceeds from this event funds Greater Boston PFLAG's Bullying Prevention, Family Support and Education Programs.

There were many new ideas for this year's Pride and Passion, and co-chairs, Joan Parker and Liz Page, put on a spectacular evening. Tables were decorated in rainbow colors (even the chairs!); the food from the featured chefs was delicious; and the free martinis, donated by Grey Goose, were very popular.

Eleven chefs donated their time and food to feed our guests in a Gourmet Taste Around, which featured Top Chef Masters™ competitors, including Boston's own Jody Adams (*Rialto*); Ana Sortun (*Oleana, SOFRA*); Susan Feniger (*Street, Border Grill*) from Los Angeles; Steven Brand and Susan Regis (*Upstairs on the Square*); Christopher Coombs (*Deuxave*); Evan Deluty (*Stella*); Joanne Gregory, (*South End Buttery*); Jay Murray (*Grill 23*); Jackie Plunkett (*Legal Sea Foods*); Robert Sisca (*Bistro du Midi*); and Brooke Vosika (*Four Seasons Boston*).

The entrees ranged from mini tacos to crab cakes to vegetarian burgers to seafood. Guests wandered from table to table sampling the different offerings while sipping their drinks from the open bar, catching up with friends, and meeting new Greater Boston PFLAG supporters.

Greater Boston PFLAG was honored to have Governor Deval L. Patrick and First Lady Diane B. Patrick as well as Mayor Thomas Menino and First Lady Angela Menino as Honorary Chairs this year. While the governor and his wife were unable to attend due to a previous engagement, Governor Patrick sent a letter with his warm greetings that was published in the evening's program. Mayor Menino mingled with guests and  
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## President's Letter

By Stan Griffith, President

Greater Boston Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc. (Greater Boston PFLAG) applauds the Report of the Commission to Review Statutes Relative to Implementation of the School Bullying Law: **Recommendations from the Review of Laws Regarding Bullying in Massachusetts**.<sup>1</sup> The Report, which was released on June 30, 2011, will be presented to the Massachusetts legislature in accordance with the recently enacted Bullying Prevention Law. We believe that the Commission's approach, if adopted by the Legislature will likely help reduce suicide and other risks confronting Massachusetts youth.

The recommendations in this report, if adopted, will make major improvements to the Massachusetts Bullying Prevention Law and will help schools to respond to bullying incidents involving Massachusetts' most at-risk youth. As noted in the report, one of the most common forms of bullying and harassment in Massachusetts' schools is based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, according to the *Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Surveys*.

Research shows that hostile climates in schools contribute to elevated risks, including an increased number of violent attacks against LGBT students and higher rates of suicide attempts and the use of drugs and alcohol among LGBT youth.

We are pleased to report that the Commission incorporated most of the recommendations for change supported by Greater Boston PFLAG in the testimony we submitted to the Commission on February 9, 2011, including our recommendations that the Massachusetts Bullying Prevention Law be amended to provide enumerated protections for persons who have historically been targeted for bullying and harassment.<sup>2</sup>

In the discussion of the Commission's favorable recommendation regarding enumeration that appears on  
(Continued on Page 2)

<sup>1</sup> A copy of the Report can be found at: <http://www.mass.gov/Cago/docs/Community/Bullying/bullying-report-june-2011.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> A full copy of Greater Boston PFLAG's written testimony can be found at: <http://www.mass.gov/Cago/docs/Community/Bullying/Testimony%20Boston/PFLAG.pdf>. See Page 3 for an executive summary of those recommendations.



**About Greater Boston Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc.**

We are a group of parents, families, friends, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. We help change attitudes and create an environment of understanding so that our LGBT family members and friends can live in a world that is safe and inclusive. Through support, education, and advocacy we foster dialogue, create safe environments, and open hearts and minds. For more information, visit [www.gbpfلاغ.org](http://www.gbpfلاغ.org).

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P.O. Box 541619  
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**Greater Boston PFLAG Connections**

We welcome coming-out stories, articles, letters, and comments from our readers. E-mail articles to: **GBPFLAG\_newsletter@yahoogroups.com**. Please include your name and phone number.

Editor and Layout: Jennifer Swanson  
Proofreader: Ann Schlesinger

**Advertising Information**

All ads must be camera-ready (ready to print) or a JPEG electronic file. Mail your artwork and payment to Greater Boston PFLAG, P.O. Box 541619, Waltham, MA 02454-1619 or email your electronic file as an attachment to [pflagsafeschools@aol.com](mailto:pflagsafeschools@aol.com).

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**Business Card**

3-1/2" w x 2" h	\$15	\$50
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**Quarter page**

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**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:** *August 15*

**President's Letter**

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pages 12 and 13 of the Report, Greater Boston PFLAG's testimony is cited in support of this crucial recommendation. Furthermore, the Commission declined to recommend things proposed by some experts who testified before the Commission that we as an organization opposed; e.g., adding provisions that would have tilted the statute more toward a reporting/punitive model at the expense of strengthening prevention efforts. We are also pleased that the Commission urged the legislature to consider extending the life of the Commission; this was Greater Boston PFLAG's suggestion.

In response to two widely-reported suicides in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts legislature passed its sweeping Bullying Prevention Law on May 3, 2010. Among other provisions in the law, the Legislature established a Commission to study the law's provisions and report back to the Legislature on its findings and recommendations for improvement by June 30, 2011.

Sometimes you win, and sometimes you win really big, which is what happened with this truly thoughtful report of the Commission. The youth and families in Massachusetts, our schools and communities, our organization—all organizations that are trying to improve schools—we are all winners. This is a huge victory for those of us who have worked so hard to create safe schools and communities, where all children can learn in an environment that is free from bullying and harassment.

Massachusetts has long been a national leader in advocating for and protecting all our youth. By issuing this report, the Commission is at the forefront of the movement to make our schools safe, welcoming and inclusive. The recommendations are practical, well researched and will help combat bias-related bullying, which is still rampant in Massachusetts schools at all levels.

We are very proud of the work that Greater Boston PFLAG does creating safe school and community environments and promoting parent and family support for LGBT youth. And we are very pleased by the excellent work done by the Commission and its staff. We look forward to working with them to see that these recommendations are adopted.

Greater Boston PFLAG is committed to creating environments of understanding and respect for gay,  
*(Continued on Page 3)*

## President's Letter

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lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, education, and advocacy to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Greater Boston PFLAG provides opportunities for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Please contact us and get involved! We need speakers; we need people with all manner of skills. We need your time, and we can always use your financial support.

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## Summary of Recommendations

Greater Boston PFLAG believes that the prevalence of anti-gay bullying and the unique needs of LGBT bullying victims and their parents warrant specialized statutory and regulatory attention. We also believe that, given the high incidence of LGBT bullying and the demonstrated deleterious effects on this high-risk population, the Legislature should amend the Bullying Law to address the grossly disparate risks affecting LGBT youth.

Accordingly, we would recommend that the Commission study the bullying prevention law submitted by the Coalition of Concerned Groups, the model law included in the UCLA Law School and National Education Policy Center Brief and the recently enacted bullying prevention laws in New Jersey and New York and make recommendations for amendment to the Bullying Law based on what is gained from that study. We urge the Commission to propose legislative amendments that would:

1. Extend the period for study of the Bullying Law for at least one additional year so as to benefit from additional experience with the law and to have the benefit of additional data regarding the law's impact.
2. Require the DESE to establish criteria and procedures for measuring school climates and the nature, frequency and prevalence of bullying.

Require local school bullying prevention plans to enumerate certain classes of persons who have been historically targeted for harassment and bullying, to establish specific prohibited conduct that would be associated with those persons, and provide culturally

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## Greater Boston PFLAG Support Groups

**Confidential Helpline: 866-427-3524**

### **Arlington**

2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:15pm; First Parish Church, Sunshine Nursery School, 630 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington; Contact: Ann at [pflagarlmass@yahoo.com](mailto:pflagarlmass@yahoo.com) or 781-891-5966.

### **Boston and Waltham**

Group for parents of transgender and/or gender variant children of any age Wednesdays, 6:30pm: August 3, Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2, and Dec. 7, Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center, 130 Boylston St., Boston; Saturdays, 10am: July 30, August 27, September 17, October 15, November 12, December 3, Greater Boston PFLAG office, 85 River St, Waltham. Additional meetings on Saturdays: September 10, October 29, November 19, and December 17 at 3464 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain. Contact: Melissa MacNish at 617-457-8140 for information and directions. Additionally, there is a group specifically for parents of children 10 years old and younger with gender variant behaviors/preferences. To learn more about this group, contact Dr. Ellen Perrin at [eperrin@tuftsmedicalcenter.org](mailto:eperrin@tuftsmedicalcenter.org).

### **Cape Ann**

1st Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm; First Universalist Church of Essex, 57 Main St., Essex (the intersection of routes 133 and 22); [www.uuessex.org](http://www.uuessex.org) for directions; Contact: Melanie at [weeartie@yahoo.com](mailto:weeartie@yahoo.com) or call 978-768-3690.

### **Concord**

3rd Sunday of the month, 7:00pm; Trinity Episcopal Church library, 81 Elm St. (enter from River St.), Concord; Contact: Beth at [bobandbethshaw@gmail.com](mailto:bobandbethshaw@gmail.com) or 978-448-3999.

### **Easton**

4th Monday of the month, 7:30pm (if holiday, then 3rd Monday); Unity Church, 9 Main St., Easton; Contact: Cecile or Mary at [pflageaston@comcast.net](mailto:pflageaston@comcast.net).

### **Framingham/MetroWest**

2nd Sunday of the month, 7:00pm; The First Parish Church, 24 Vernon St., Framingham; Contact: [metrowestpflag@verizon.net](mailto:metrowestpflag@verizon.net) or 781-891-5966.

### **Merrimack Valley PFLAG Chapter**

4th Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm; South Church, 41 Central St., Andover, MA. Contact: [merrimackvalleypflag@gmail.com](mailto:merrimackvalleypflag@gmail.com) or 781-891-5966

### **Reading**

2nd Thursday of the month, 7:30pm; Loring House, 211 Summer Ave., Reading, on the campus of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Reading, at the intersection of Woburn St. and Summer Ave.; Contact: Martha at [pflagreading@aol.com](mailto:pflagreading@aol.com).

### **Always Our Children**

1st Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm; Community Room of Sacred Heart Convent (behind Sacred Heart Church), 395 Chestnut St., Springfield; Contact: [www.fortunatefamilies.com](http://www.fortunatefamilies.com) or Ann at 413-736-6803.

### **One-to-One Parent Support**

If you wish to speak more extensively over the phone or in person with one of our trained volunteers, we offer one-to-one parent support. We match your situation to that of one of our volunteers (i.e., dad with a gay son can speak to another dad if he wishes). All meetings are confidential. For more information, please call 781-891-5966 or email [info@gbpflag.org](mailto:info@gbpflag.org).

## Summary of Recommendations

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- appropriate training to students, faculty and parents designed to create safe and inclusive schools that provide all children with an environment where they can learn and thrive.
3. Authorize and direct the DESE to adopt a model bullying prevention and other research-based guides that establish “best practices”. These should be incorporated into regulations and should be binding on local school boards. Furthermore, any assessment of compliance and effectiveness should be tested against the model bullying prevention plan and other best practices guidelines that are adopted by regulation.
  4. Require schools to promote programs that cultivate youth leadership and involve youth in all aspects of the design and implementation of their bullying prevention plans and to design and participate in training of students, faculty and parents.
  5. Require schools to document and report on those aspects of their bullying prevention plans intended to promote parent involvement.
  6. Require school officials to periodically report to the DESE concerning all material aspects of the implementation and operation of a school’s bullying prevention plan.
  7. Require each school district to devise and publish two documents, a “Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities” and a “Parent Bill of Rights and Responsibilities”. We would urge that the development of the particulars of these two documents be delegated to the DESE and that the DESE be authorized and directed to adopt regulations concerning the orderly implementation of these two Bills of Rights and certain mandatory content.
  8. Require the DESE to appoint an ombudsman to receive and respond to complaints regarding any alleged lack of responsiveness by local school officials and to compile certain reports on those complaints.
  9. Provide for a study of the state and local costs associated with a comprehensive and truly effective bullying prevention program and the costs embedded in the currently under funded bullying prevention programs that exist today. This study might be conducted by the DESE or, if the Commission continues in existence beyond the date set for its report on June 30, 2011, by the Commission.



### TRANSGENDER EXPLAINED For Those Who Are Not

by  
Joanne Herman

A much-needed basic primer organized by topic into short, easy-to-read chapters. Perfect for parents, relatives, colleagues, friends, allies, and even journalists who want to quickly get up to speed on what it means to be transgender.

Find it on Amazon.com, BarnesAndNoble.com, Borders.com,  
and at select retailers  
148 pages—Suggested Retail Price \$14.95

## Step UP! Pride and Passion, 2011

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graciously participated in picture-taking at the start of the evening.

Other honored participants included the Elsie Frank scholarship winners (see next article) as well as Tufts University’s Beelzebubs, the *a cappella* group featured on “Glee” as the voices of the Dalton Academy Warblers. The Beelzebubs performed several songs to help raise the energy level, which ended in rousing applause before the auction started.

Always the highlight of the evening, the live auction offered exciting items up for bid such as lunch in Hollywood with Jane Lynch (“Glee”), which included roundtrip airfare donated by American Airlines, dinner at Susan Feniger’s restaurant, Street, and a stay at the Hyatt Hotel; an exotic photo safari to South Africa; and tickets to a James Taylor concert at Tanglewood.

No Greater Boston PFLAG event is complete without stories from people who have been impacted by our work, and this night was no exception. George Murphy, a freshman at Tufts University and speaker for Greater Boston PFLAG, shared his personal experience of triumph over horrendous bullying at home and at  
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## Step UP! Pride and Passion, 2011

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school. A video created by Susan Dangel showed interviews with parents and students who have benefited from our work.

Proceeds from Pride and Passion help Greater Boston PFLAG meet the growing demands for its bullying prevention services. It supports cutting-edge outreach and educational programs that provide accurate information about the crucial role of parental acceptance in the health and well-being of LGBT youth.

Also, at the event, we announced that with the help of its Founding Sponsor BNY Mellon and Presenting Sponsor Fidelity Investments, we are launching a new initiative to bring PFLAG education and support services into the workplace. The goal of this program is to create a model program that all employers throughout the country can provide to their employees.

On behalf of the board of directors, thank you for coming to this year's fundraiser and for your generosity. The Board of Directors would particularly like to thank all the sponsors for their support for Step UP! Pride and Passion, 2011.

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## 2011 Elsie Frank Scholarship Award Recipients

Greater Boston PFLAG received eighty-three applications from 69 high schools in Massachusetts. The scholarship committee had a difficult time with the selection of four students. The following recipients were chosen because of their outstanding efforts to improve their school climate for LGBT youth and their allies.

**Nicholas Diaz:** Nicholas Diaz graduated from Brighton High School where he was an active member of the GSA and a high honors student, after dropping out of his previous school due to bullying and lack of teacher support. Nicholas dedicated himself fully to being a voice for LGBT students by joining the GLSEN Board of Directors and becoming a youth coordinator for the Jump Start program. In addition, Nicholas testified before Martha Coakley's panel on bullying and has been featured on Boston.com and Channel 5's special, "Growing Up Gay." Nicholas will be attending Center

College in Danville, KY to study Business Administration and Political Science.

**Brandon Lee Markowitz:** Brandon Lee Markowitz graduated from Taunton High School where he was a co-president of the GSA. He also participated on the Massachusetts Commission for LGBT Youth, traveled to Maine to protest Prop 1 that repealed gay marriage in that state, and joined in the National Equality March. Brandon is an award-winning photographer whose *Love and Pride* portfolio is currently on display in Boston as a Gold Key Award winner in the Scholastic Art and Writing competition. Despite being kicked out of his home earlier this year because of his sexuality, Brandon still graduated in June and plans to attend college in the fall, where he will double-major in Photography and Psychology.

**Samantha Scovill:** Samantha Scovill graduated from Falmouth High School, where she has served as both vice president and president of the GSA. Sammie served on the planning committee for her school's *No Guff* program to combat bullying, was a member of the school's Strategic Planning Committee on Diversity, and helped to create an Ally Week sponsored by the GSA. Outside of school, Sammie organized student trips to BAGLY, is a student speaker for Greater Boston PFLAG, and was chosen as a Channel 5 A+ student. Her teachers credit her for "making it safe to be openly gay" at Falmouth High School. Sammie plans on studying Environmental Sciences at Smith College.

**Vanessa Velasquez:** Vanessa Velasquez graduated from Triton Regional High School in Byfield. Her activism, inspired by her two moms and a gay brother, has resulted in a leadership role in the school's GSA, which wrapped up its most successful year ever. Under Vanessa's guidance, the GSA-hosted Ally Week, helped produce the play "Removing the Glove" with the Drama and Art Department, aired segments on the Trevor Project and the "It Gets Better Project" on the school's TV channel, and put on an assembly that resulted in 263 pledges from student allies. Vanessa's motto is to "Take risks and fear not the 'What ifs,'" which she will continue to do in college as a History and Education major.

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## Greater Boston PFLAG Selected as Associate Member of Community Works

Greater Boston PFLAG has been selected to be an Associate Member of Community Works in the company of other like-minded organizations such as the ACLU and GLAD.

Its website best describes Community Works' focus. "Community Works is a portfolio of 33 local social justice organizations providing Massachusetts residents a unique opportunity to invest in long-term systemic change. Community Works members have joined forces to work for affordable housing, quality health care, environmental justice, civil rights, safe neighborhoods, economic equity, and youth leadership. Our members involve local people in making the changes that will build robust communities. We celebrate the interconnections and diversity that is true community. All of us benefit from a more just society."

One of the areas where Community Works has contributed is equal rights, where it fought for and helped win equal rights marriage cases in Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

This is an excellent opportunity for Greater Boston PFLAG to receive donations from employees at over fifty local workplaces, many of which we do not yet have a relationship with. To find out more, go to: [www.communityworks.com](http://www.communityworks.com).

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## The 26<sup>th</sup> Boston AIDS Walk

*By Jennifer Swanson, Board Member*

Sunday, June 5 was my second year participating in the Boston AIDS Walk. Last year I was able to walk with the captain of the Greater Boston PFLAG team, Inez Folsom, although I couldn't walk the entire route.

This year I didn't even try walking but volunteered instead. As a volunteer, I was still expected to raise money, and thanks to all my supporters I surpassed my \$300 goal!

The weather was beautiful this year, unlike last year. I was in the money tent, where I collected envelopes from walkers and made sure they were registered. It was a great feeling to be able to give my time, although I wished I could have done the walk. There's nothing like walking over the final bridge and having the cheering squad yell and thank you for helping fight

AIDS. At the end of the walk, there are booths that give away free goodies, like salads, hot dogs, and drinks.

Greater Boston PFLAG was a Gold Team this year, because it was our 25<sup>th</sup> year in a row participating in the Walk. The team met its goal of \$7,000, with only five team members. Think how much better we could have done with more people! I encourage you to come and join us next year.

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## PFLAG National Thanks HHS Secretary Sebelius for Moving Equality Forward

*Press Release, 4/5/11*

WASHINGTON, DC: On Friday, April 1st, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a number of steps it was recommending to the President to improve the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Americans. The agency said it was confident of the President's support for the initiatives.

The recommendations include policies that prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity for HHS programs and employees, increase the number of federally-funded health surveys that collect sexual orientation and gender identity data, and encourage health profession training programs to include LGBT cultural competency curricula.

HHS will take additional steps, integrating an even stronger component focusing on LGBT youth in all anti-bullying initiatives, reducing the barriers encountered by prospective and current foster and adoptive parents who are LGBT, and requiring all organizations serving runaway and homeless youth to be equipped to serve LGBT youth. These commitments are major advocacy wins that support PFLAG's ongoing efforts to improve the health and well-being for LGBT individuals and their families, at the local, state and national level.

"We applaud Secretary Sebelius for taking steps to end discrimination against so many of our LGBT loved ones and their families," said PFLAG National president, Rabbi David M. Horowitz. "Her leadership in responding to the needs of LGBT people in federally supported health programs will certainly lead to fostering stronger families for all. We at PFLAG National look forward to continuing our work with this administration

to respond to the health-related needs of all Americans."

The HHS announcement was in response to an April 2010 memorandum from the President that not only directed HHS to put out rules prohibiting anti-LGBT discrimination in hospital visitation, but also asked HHS to explore additional steps the agency could take to improve the lives of LGBT communities. The final hospital visitation rules were announced in November and took effect in January.

For complete details on all of the department's recommended actions, visit the HHS website at <http://www.hhs.gov/secretary/about/lgbthealth.html>.

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**The Samaritans** provide a free and confidential 24-hour befriending helpline. This unique service, staffed entirely by volunteers, provides unconditional and non-judgmental support to anyone who feels alone, depressed, or in crisis.

**Samariteens** is a peer support line staffed by teens talking to teen callers during after-school and weekend hours. For more information on volunteering, call us at 617-536-2460 or visit us online at [www.samaritansofboston.org](http://www.samaritansofboston.org). If you need to talk to someone on our help lines for any reason, you can reach us at **617-247-0220** or **877-870-HOPE (4673)** or for teens at **800-252-TEEN (8336)**.

## Greater Boston PFLAG Activities

By Pam Garramone, Executive Director

### Safe Schools and Communities Engagement Update

Greater Boston PFLAG Executive Director, Pam Garramone, parents of LGBT children, and LGBT speakers presented their personal stories and provided diversity training in 216 venues reaching over 12,000 people from August 2010 to June 2011. Speakers received specific training before they presented to students, faculty, and employees in corporate and community organizations. Twenty-three new speakers were trained in February. Printed resources were distributed at each engagement to meet the needs of the audience.

Training was delivered to: 117 high school audiences, 11 corporations, 21 college groups, 18 community events, 13 conferences, 4 faculty trainings, 3 middle schools, 16 employee groups in community organizations, and 13 religious organizations.

With just one full-time staff person, one part-time accounting manager, one college intern, one college work-study student, and up to 200 volunteers, we were able to have a tremendous impact with limited resources.

### Boston PRIDE Parade and Festival

Over fifty people marched with Greater Boston PFLAG on June 11 despite the rainy day. Wearing Greater Boston PFLAG t-shirts and carrying a banner, the group proudly marched and showed their support for Boston PRIDE. In addition to the Greater Boston PFLAG walkers, New Hampshire PFLAG also joined the group, which raised the total number of walkers to over one hundred!

Greater Boston PFLAG had a booth at the PRIDE Festival, where we sold items such as beads, t-shirts, and buttons. Merchandise sales support our Elsie Frank Scholarship program.

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*Are you excited about Greater Boston PFLAG's activities, or has Greater Boston PFLAG helped you handle a particular situation? Write us a letter to explain how we were able to help, and with your permission, we'll publish it to show members what types of services they can count on from us.*

*Would you like to meet PFLAG parents and activists from around the country? Learn what PFLAG chapters are doing around the country and meet the most committed and passionate people! Join Greater Boston PFLAG at the PFLAG National Conference!*

**For more information and to register, go to [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).**



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